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AUTHOR	Rumble, Richard R.
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ABSTRACT

One-hundred and twenty vocational cluster teachers completed a questionnaire on their attitudes toward the integration of handicapped students into vocational programs. Results were analyzed in terms of contact and willingness to work with the handicapped, teacher attitudes, accommodation of the handicapped, needed assistance, and practicality of mainstreaming. Among major findings were a clear relationship between contact with the handicapped and teacher confort; concern about personal liability in working with the handicapped; and indications of need for extra support personnel, training in instructional methods, and curriculum development. (CL)

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A SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF SECONDARY VOCATIONAL CLUSTER TEACHERS TOWARD THE MAINSTREAMING OF HANDICAPPED LEARNERS

(A Research Project in Vocational Education
in the Portland Public Schools)

by

Richard R. Rumble

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Preface

A survey of 402 teachers in Area III, Portland Public Schools, regarding teacher attitudes toward mainstreaming handicapped learners into regular classes yielded interesting and very usable information. The study was part of a Vocational Education Research Project funded by Vocational Education Programs part (C). The final report of the study, A Survey of the Attitudes of Secondary Teachers Toward the Mainstreaming of Handicapped Learners, may be obtained from the Portland Public Schools Educational Media Department. Among a number of suggestions for action was the need for a more intensive examination of the attitudes of vocational cluster teachers regarding the integration of the handicapped into their programs. That is the subject of this report.

Procedure. Basically the same sampling procedures were followed as those used in the previous study. One hundred and thirty-eight teachers of approved vocational clusters in all Portland high schools were identified for the sample. A system of monitoring responses was employed, so each initial non-respondent was sent a new questionnaire and a note requesting the person's cooperation, when an initial response had not been received. A total of one hundred and twenty useable questionnaires were returned, providing a response rate of 87 percent. This compared favorably with the teacher response rate of 84 percent in the previous study.

Discussion

Contact with the handicapped. The degree of contact that cluster

teachers have had with handicapped persons was learned by listing eight major handicapped groups and asking respondents to indicate the degree of contact they had had with each group. A five point scale was used. Later the "none" and "brief exposure" responses were compressed into a "minimal contact" category, and "moderate" and "have worked with this category" were compressed into a "moderate to heavy" response grouping. Table I shows the degree of exposure cluster teachers have had to working with the handicapped. Their degree of contact was not found to be substantially different from those of the previous attitude survey of the Area III teachers.

TABLE I

Handicapping Category	% Indicating Moderate or Greater Contact: Cluster Teachers N=120	Total Teachers N=402
Orthopedic	31	39
Blind/Visually Impaired	26	39
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	58	47
Educable Mentally Retarded	49	54
Trainable Mentally Retarded	33	38
Emotional	55	59
Learning Disabled	60	59
Speech Impaired	50	50

Contact with the handicapped varies slightly between vocational clusters and between schools, but the responses showed that cluster teachers have generally not had much contact with the handicapped.

Orthopedically handicapped (OH) and blind/visually impaired (B/VI), and trainable mentally retarded (TMR) contact is particularly light because of the limited size of the populations.

Willingness to work with the handicapped. As learned from the previous study, there is a general relationship between acceptance of and willingness to work with the handicapped and frequency of contact with the handicapped. Table II indicates the degree to which vocational cluster teacher "...would be willing to work with the following kinds of handicapped learners", if they had a choice. Responses are shown in percentages, but the reader should be cautious in drawing conclusions, since many of the sample numbers are small. Generalizations might be drawn from the total response figures, however, and comparisons can be drawn between the vocational cluster teacher responses and responses of the total teacher group of the previous study. It should also be noted that no responses were received from institutional home management and service occupations teachers, thus no statements about their attitudes or experiences will be made in this report.

By adding the percentages listed in the cluster columns of Table II, one can get some idea of the relative acceptance levels of teachers of various clusters. Table III shows such a ranking in descending order. Only vocational clusters that were represented by three or more teacher responses were included in Table III, since the gross percentage totals do not reflect the number of respondents they represent. Again, the reader should be aware that the data generally represent small samples when listed by vocational cluster.

TABLE II

WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH HANDICAPPED LEARNERS - BY HANDICAPPING CONDITION

	Ag/Hort.	Market.	Health	Foods	Account.	Clerical	Secretarial	Mechanic.	Const.	Elect.	Metals	Child Care	Clothing	Drafting	Graphics	Acc/Market.	Cleric/Sec.	All Bus.	Total Cluster Teachers	Total Teachers
Number =	8	3	6	4	3	21	8	15	5	9	12	4	1	1	4	1	14	1	120	402
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
OH	25	67	67	25	33	62	50	40	20	89	33	75	0	100	100	0	43	100	51	52
B/VI	0	33	17	0	0	43	50	0	20	22	17	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	19	35
D/HI	50	67	67	50	33	67	38	40	60	78	83	50	100	100	100	100	64	100	63	39
EMR	38	67	17	75	33	48	38	6	20	78	42	50	0	0	0	0	0	100	38	36
TMR	13	0	17	75	33	24	13	13	0	78	42	0	0	0	0	0	21	100	25	22
EH	0	67	50	50	0	24	38	6	0	67	25	0	0	0	25	25	21	100	25	32
LD	50	33	33	50	33	48	50	33	40	78	58	0	0	0	25	0	29	0	42	38
SI	50	33	17	100	67	57	50	53	40	100	42	25	100	100	50	0	57	100	55	35

Table III gives comparative information which may be useful in identifying cluster areas where teachers are most receptive to enrolling handicapped students, but if the reader closely examines the percentages in Table II, one can see that vocational cluster teachers are not overly enthusiastic about working with the handicapped. Vocational teachers are apparently less anxious to work with the B/VI and EH populations, than the total teacher group, but they show a greater willingness to work with the D/HI and the SI groups.

TABLE III

WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH HANDICAPPED LEARNERS,
BY CLUSTER, IN DESCENDING ORDER

Cluster	No. Resp.	Total % Points
Electrical	9	590
Food Service	4	425
Marketing	3	367
Metals	12	342
Secretarial	8	327
Clerical	21	312
Graphics	4	300
Health	6	285
Clerical/Sec.	14	256
Accounting	3	238
Agriculture/Hort.	8	226
Construction	5	200
Child Care	4	200
Mechanical	15	191

When asked if they prefer to teach non-handicapped students, 40 percent of the vocational cluster teachers responded that they did. The response was similar to the 44 percent obtained from the earlier study involving 402 educators from Area III. Both samples indicate a sizeable number of vocational and non-vocational teachers prefer not to teach the handicapped.

Vocational teacher attitudes. Eight items were prepared to learn which attitudes of teachers will affect them as teachers of the handicapped.

Sixty-eight percent of the 120 vocational cluster teachers indicated they feel comfortable around handicapped persons. Food service, health occupations, clerical, and electrical teachers indicated generally the highest comfort levels. Agriculture/horticulture, mechanical, construction, and graphics teachers indicated the lowest comfort levels.

When asked whether or not they felt it was fair that they be expected to teach the handicapped, 55 percent of the vocational cluster teachers responded affirmatively. This, of course, would suggest that nearly half of the population does not feel that such a request would be fair. Construction, electrical, and child care teachers were most affirmative in their responses. Marketing, health occupations, accounting and clerical/secretarial teachers were most negative in their reactions to the question.

Three questions were directed at the effect teachers felt handicapped learners would have on non-handicapped youth. Thirty-seven percent of the vocational cluster teachers felt, "Handicapped learners will enhance the learning of all students." This compares less favorably

with the response of the total teacher population on the previous study, which was 46 percent. Fifty-five percent of the vocational teachers stated handicapped learners should be able to experience anything other students experience, and 58 percent said students who do not have one of the handicaps will benefit from students who do have handicaps. The previous study yielded responses of 46 percent and 59 percent to these items.

Three items provided insight into strategy for mainstreaming the handicapped. All teachers feel very strongly that vocational training for handicapped youngsters should lead to further vocational training or employment, that handicapped students should aspire to further education and/or employment, and that cooperative planning and teaching with special education teachers will improve handicapped student performance. Vocational cluster teacher responses to the items were 82 percent, 83 percent, and 90 percent, somewhat more positive than the total teacher population response.

Accommodation of the handicapped. The teachers were asked which groups of handicapped learners they could accommodate without making major alterations in their present instructional setting. Table IV reports the responses of the vocational cluster teachers. The reader will note that with the possible exception of the speech impaired (SI), little optimism was shown for accommodating the handicapped in the vocational cluster teachers' present instructional settings. The lack of optimism for accommodating the B/VI group is particularly noteworthy, yet marketing teachers showed some hope for working with the group (67 percent). A cursory glance at the total response column

TABLE IV

ACCOMMODATION INTO PRESENT INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING WITHOUT MAJOR ALTERATIONS

	Ag/Hort.	Market.	Health	Foods	Account.	Clerical	Secretarial	Mechanic.	Const.	Elect.	Metals	Child Care	Clothing	Drafting	Graphics	Acc/Market.	Cleric/Sec.	All Bus.	Total Cluster Teachers	Total Teachers
Number =	8	3	6	4	3	21	8	15	5	9	12	4	1	1	4	1	14	1	120	402
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
OH	13	67	50	0	67	57	38	20	20	56	17	50	0	100	25	0	50	100	38	54
B/VI	0	67	0	0	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	8	24
D/HI	50	33	50	25	33	57	25	33	20	67	67	75	100	100	75	0	50	100	48	40
EMR	25	67	0	50	0	43	50	20	0	56	33	75	100	0	25	0	21	0	33	35
TMR	0	0	0	25	0	19	13	27	20	78	33	50	0	0	25	0	21	0	23	19
EH	25	67	33	25	0	29	50	13	0	67	50	25	0	0	25	0	29	100	32	35
LD	50	33	50	50	0	43	50	40	20	56	50	50	0	0	25	0	7	0	38	34
SI	75	100	17	50	100	86	50	80	60	78	83	50	100	100	75	0	79	100	73	55

suggests that teachers feel major alterations in instructional settings will be required if the handicapped are to be accommodated in vocational cluster classes. When the reader compares the responses of the vocational cluster teachers and the total teachers, generally consistent patterns are seen. Cluster teachers state they are somewhat more able to accommodate the SI than are the general educators. They show less ability to accommodate the B/VI and the OH populations, though, but in neither case was either group optimistic about their ability to accommodate either of the two groups.

Needed assistance. A number of areas in which assistance might be needed were reviewed by the respondents, and their reactions appear in Table V. They are listed by vocational cluster, total cluster teacher response, and total teacher response from the previous study.

A very strong need was expressed for extra support personnel (81%). Vocational teachers also expressed a need for training in instructional methods (65%) and obtaining instructional materials (60%). The reader may want to examine Table V to learn the priority assistance areas identified by teachers of specific clusters.

Practicality of mainstreaming. Nine items were directed at learning how vocational cluster teachers felt about the practicality of mainstreaming handicapped learners. As in the items dealing with contacts with the handicapped, respondents were given five choices for each item. Responses one and two were compressed into "disagree"

TABLE V

AREAS IN WHICH ASSISTANCE WILL BE NEEDED

	Ag/Hort.	Market.	Health	Foods	Account.	Clerical	Secretarial	Mechanic.	Const.	Elect.	Metals	Child Care	Clothing	Drafting	Graphics	Acc/Market.	Cleric/Sec.	All Bus.	Total Cluster Teachers	Total Teachers
Number =	8	3	6	4	3	21	8	15	5	9	12	4	1	1	4	1	14	1	120	402
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
extra support personnel	88	67	100	100	33	81	67	73	60	89	83	75	100	100	75	100	86	0	81	66
special equipment	13	67	50	25	33	62	50	13	60	78	42	75	100	100	25	100	21	0	43	42
modification of facilities	50	33	33	50	33	48	25	20	60	33	50	75	100	0	50	0	36	0	40	34
training in inst. methods	88	67	67	100	100	71	63	40	40	89	33	75	100	0	75	0	79	0	65	61
obtaining inst. materials	38	67	67	50	100	67	88	40	40	56	58	100	100	0	0	0	79	100	60	56
curriculum development	63	33	50	75	100	52	50	20	40	67	42	50	100	0	25	0	50	0	48	46
changing my attitudes	25	33	33	0	33	10	13	6	0	11	8	50	100	0	0	0	14	0	14	19
changing my inst. behavior	50	33	83	25	33	29	25	13	20	44	25	25	100	100	0	0	14	0	29	31
consistent, adequate funding	50	67	67	50	67	62	50	27	80	67	58	75	100	0	75	0	64	0	57	48
more effective admin. leadership	0	33	50	0	33	14	25	0	40	11	25	25	0	0	0	0	7	0	15	24

responses, and responses four and five were compressed into "agree" responses. Response three was determined to be neutral. Table VI indicates the percentages of vocational educators and general educators from the previous study that agreed with each statement.

TABLE VI

Item	% of agree responses: Voc. Cluster Teachers	Total Teachers
Cost too high	27	44
Too many students	74	69
Teachers' ability to individualize	65	77
No need to change things	14	6
Curriculum often not easily individualized	58	80
Increased paperwork, ie. IEPs.	74	80
Too many other responsibilities	79	82
Need for administrative direction	55	57
Uncertainty about teacher liability	68	66

Somewhat fewer vocational cluster teachers felt that costs were too high, that teachers' ability to individualize, and the difficulty of individualizing curriculum would be a problem than did the total teacher group. This may be partly explained by the fact that most vocational clusters employ individualized instructional methods and a competency-based curriculum.

Most teachers felt they had too many students, too many other responsibilities, and that increased paperwork would be a problem.

Apparently there is a feeling that there is a need to change things regarding the vocational education of the handicapped.

Summary. The survey of Portland Public Schools vocational cluster teachers provided considerable information regarding the attitudes of teachers and their perceived abilities to work successfully with the handicapped. The reactions of vocational cluster teachers to the various items did not vary substantially from that of the general teaching population which was surveyed in an earlier study.

Major findings of the Vocational Cluster Teacher survey include:

1. Vocational cluster teachers were sufficiently concerned about the topic to return surveys at an 87 percent response rate.

2. Teacher contact with handicapped groups varies, and it is somewhat related to the size of the handicapped population. For example, fewer teachers have had contact with the blind or visually handicapped, which constitutes about one percent of the handicapped population receiving services, than they have had with the speech impaired, which makes up about 35 percent of the handicapped population receiving services. Many vocational teachers have had no contact with the handicapped.

3. There is a clear relationship between contact with the handicapped and the degree to which teachers stated they feel comfortable. Vocational teachers who have had no contact with the handicapped state a much stronger preference to teach non-handicapped students than do their colleagues who have had frequent or close contact.

4. Other than a moderate willingness to work with the D/HI population (63 percent), the SI (55 percent), and the OH group (51 percent) vocational cluster teachers showed very little enthusiasm for working with the handicapped.

5. Most teachers do not feel they can accommodate the handicapped in their present instructional settings. Seventy-three percent feel they can accommodate the SI populations, however. About half of the teachers thought they could easily accommodate the deaf, but they were far less optimistic about other groups of the handicapped.

6. There is a relationship between vocational cluster and the estimated ease with which handicapped students can be accommodated in specific classes. Generally the electrical, marketing, child care, clerical, and metals teachers were most encouraging. Of those cluster teachers, however, only the marketing teachers were optimistic about accommodating the B/VI . Clusters that are apparently least adaptable to the handicapped include health occupations, accounting, construction, food services, and mechanical. No handicapped group other than the SI got encouraging responses from the total group of vocational cluster teachers regarding the relative ease of accommodating them into classes without major alterations to the instructional setting.

7. Vocational teachers feel that several factors make the mainstreaming of handicapped students impractical. The concerns of vocational

cluster teachers are much the same as those that were stated by the total teacher group in the previous study. The ease of individualizing curriculum was of somewhat less concern to cluster teachers. Among the most commonly accepted reasons were:

a. increased paperwork
b. too many other responsibilities
c. teachers' inability to individualize
d. too many students
e. curriculum not easily individualized.

Vocational cluster teachers were particularly adamant about class sizes, citing too many students as a major problem.

8. Vocational cluster teachers feel that they have too many students, and they are concerned about their personal liability when working with the handicapped. To some extent the two concerns may be related.

9. The assistance most needed by vocational cluster teachers seems to be:

a. extra support personnel
b. training in instructional methods
c. obtaining instructional materials
d. curriculum development
e. consistent, adequate funding

10. Educators in both surveys expressed very high agreement that handicapped students should aspire to further education and employment beyond high school, that vocational training for the

handicapped should lead to further training or employment, and that cooperative teaching and planning with special education teachers would improve handicapped student performances. There was particularly high agreement among the vocational cluster teachers on these issues.

11. None of the educators indicated a need to change their attitudes or to change their instructional behavior. However, both surveys indicated that all the educators very strongly disagreed with the statement that there is "no need to change things" (regarding vocational education of the handicapped).